Promoting Environmental Justice by Using Cultural Competency as a Model

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Objectives

1. Discuss history and differences between mainstream environmental and environmental justice (EJ) movements

2. Review environmental racism versus EJ

3. Explain cultural competency (CC) framework

4. Demonstrate need for CC awareness of EJ in environmental cleanup profession

5. EJ mechanism to re-integrate environmental health with public health

EJ as a Meeting Ground -
Reconnecting public health and environmental health

Public health → **Environmental Justice** ← **Environmental Health**

Modern Environmentalism History: (1960's)

- Agenda: preservation of wilderness and wildlife, resource conservation, pollution abatement, population control

- Social justice orientation with roots in civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movements

- Highly participatory

"Mainstream Environmentalism" Diverges: (1970's)

- Legal and scientific approaches to solving environmental issues

- Movement becomes "insider" focused and elitist -Litigation, lobbying, and technical evaluation

- Environmental legislation (Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Superfund, etc)

Mainstream Environmentalism Diverges: (1970's continued)

- New pollution business industry evolves (environmental scientists, engineers, managers, lawyers)

- Comprised of middle and upper class whites with above average education, greater access to economic resources, higher self efficacy

Mainstream Environmentalism
(1970's continued)

- Social justice dropped from environmental agenda

- Communities of color and low income groups excluded

- Disadvantaged groups lack expertise to participate or assist in environmental decision making

Environmental Justice Movement (1980's)

People of color have come to understand that environmentalists are no more enlightened than non-environmentalists when it comes to issues of justice and social equity

(Bullard, 2000)

Definition: Environmental Racism/injustice

"Any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color. Environmental racism combines public policies and industry practices to provide benefits for whites while shifting industry costs to people of color. It is reinforced by governmental, legal, economic, political, and military institutions."

(Bullard, 2000)

Dominant Environmental Protection Paradigm:

1. Institutionalizes unequal enforcement of laws.

2. Trades human and ecological health for profit

3. Places burden of proof on victims as opposed to polluting industry itself

4. Differential exposure to harmful chemicals in home, school, neighborhood, workplace

Dominant Environmental Protection Paradigm (continued)

5. Risk assessment perpetuates injustice - faulty assumptions

6. Discriminatory zoning and land-use practices

7. Exclusionary policies and practices in participating in decision making

8. Delays in cleanup actions

Environmental racism is considered a human rights violation.

It deprives communities of color of their economic, social, and cultural rights.
(Bullard, 2000)

Environmental Justice
"Environmentalism Redefined"

"The environmental justice movement has basically redefined what environmentalism is all about. It basically says that the environment is everything: where we live, work, play, go to school, as well as the physical and natural world. And so we can't separate the physical environment from the cultural environment."

Bullard (1999)

Principles of EJ – five characteristics

1. Protect all persons from env degradation
2. Adopt public health prevention harm approach
3. Place burden of proof on polluters
4. Obviate requirement to prove intent to discriminate
5. Redress existing inequities by targeting action and resources

Rechtschaffen & Gauna, 2003

EJ vs. Mainstream Environmental Movement - social agenda

- Social determinants of health orientation – exposure to pollution is rooted in disparities caused by societal structure

- Social justice demands – clean jobs, sustainable economy, safe and affordable housing, racial justice (Cole & Foster, 2001)

EJ Movement Recognition – Social factors increases susceptibility to disease

- Poor nutrition

- Socioeconomic stress

- Insufficient access to health care

- Lack of affordable and/or safe housing

- Lack of community cohesion

- Limited control at work
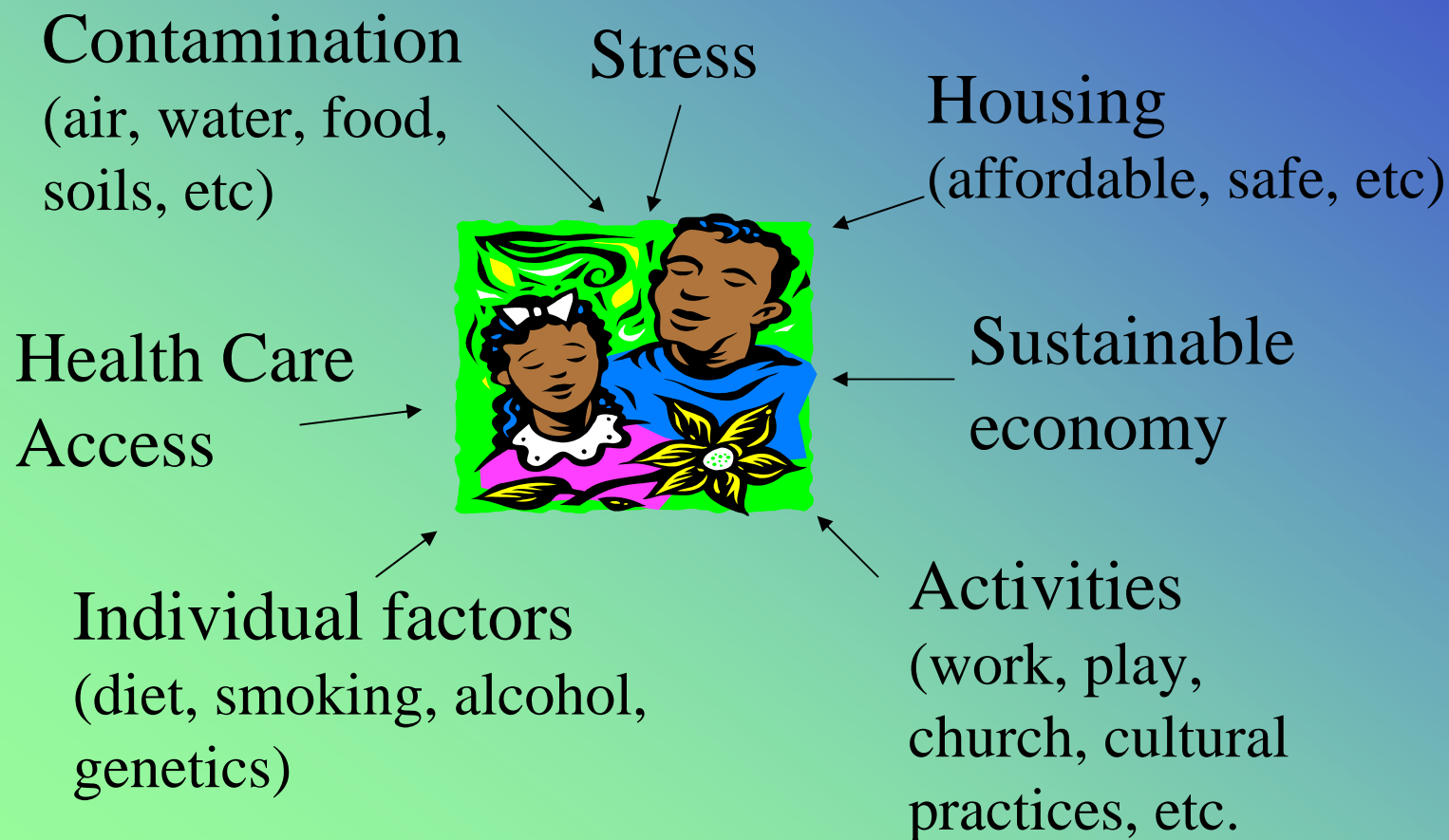
- Co-exposure to other pollutants

EJ environment defined differently:

- Includes home, workplace, community in addition to toxic assaults

- *"A community's perception is its reality"* (Bullard, 1994)

- Health impacts can be psychosocial – If water/air perceived to be contaminated, lifestyle is affected (Edelstein, 2002)

Pyschosocial Impacts on Health

- Distrust and stress if no participation
- Loss of control of physical and social environment
- If environment perceived to be contaminated, life style behavior changes (bathing, gardening, cooking, diet, cleaning)
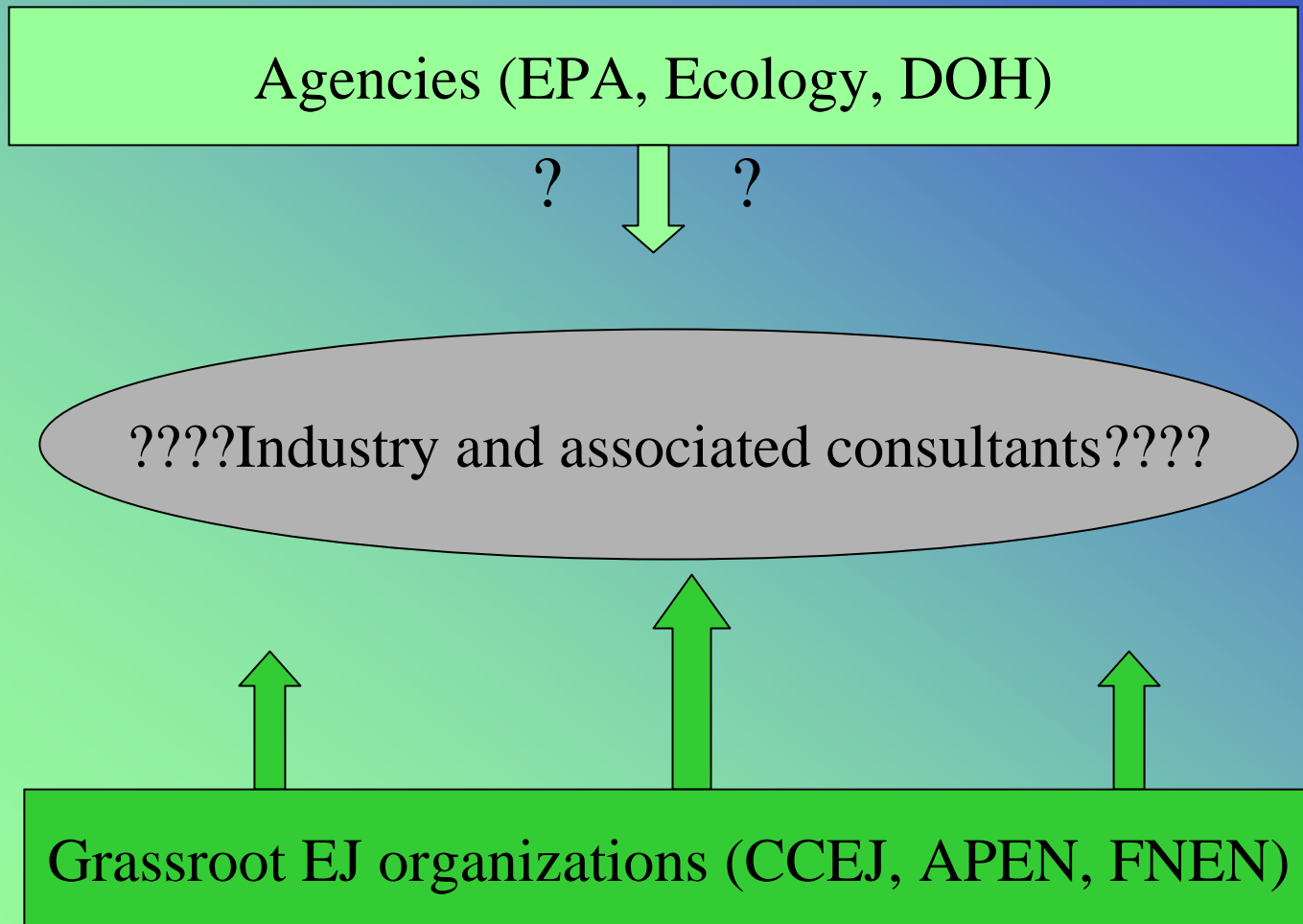- Noise, odors, traffic, etc

Political, Economic, Social, and Cultural/Spiritual Context to EJ

Contamination
(air, water, food, soils, etc)

Stress

Housing
(affordable, safe, etc)

Health Care Access

Sustainable economy

Individual factors
(diet, smoking, alcohol, genetics)

Activities
(work, play, church, cultural practices, etc.

Objectives 3 and 4

3. Explain cultural competency (CC) framework

4. Demonstrate need for CC awareness of EJ in environmental cleanup profession

Environmental Justice Awareness/Action

Agencies (EPA, Ecology, DOH)

? ↓ ?

????Industry and associated consultants????

↑ ↑ ↑

Grassroot EJ organizations (CCEJ, APEN, FNEN)

Definition Cultural Competence

"*A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. The word culture is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group.*"
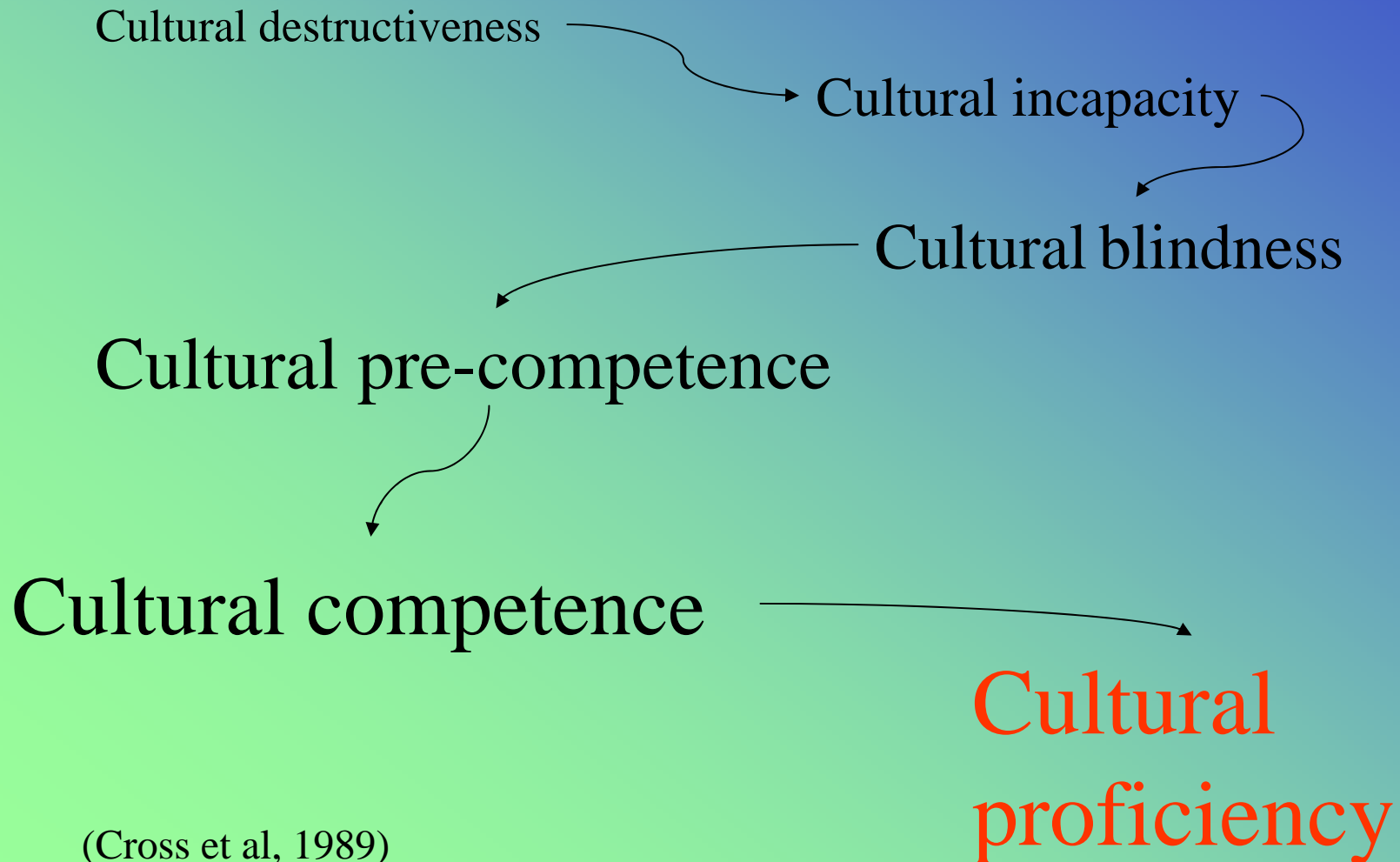
(Cross et al. 1989)

Cultural Competency History

- Terry Cross monograph 1989
- Philosophical framework and practical ideas for improving service delivery to children of color who are severely emotionally disturbed
- People with limited access to economic, political, or social power

Cultural Competency Today

- Extended and applied into broad public health arena

- Culture competency concept broadened to include communities disenfranchised, stigmatized and/or misunderstood by mainstream U.S. culture (gays, homeless, disabled, refugees/immigrants, elderly, domestic violence survivors)

- Recent extension to environmental justice.

Cultural Competence Continuum:
A developmental process

Cultural destructiveness

Cultural incapacity

Cultural blindness

Cultural pre-competence

Cultural competence

Cultural proficiency

(Cross et al, 1989)

A Culturally Competent System:

- Incorporated at institutional, agency, and professional levels
- Attitudes, policies, and practices must be congruent at each level

Five Essential Elements in Becoming Culturally Competent at every level

1. Valuing diversity
2. Capacity for cultural self-assessment
3. Conscious of dynamics of interacting cultures
4. Institutionalizing cultural knowledge
5. Adapting service delivery to reflect understanding of diversity

Cultural Competence Self Assessment

- 1970's – "Mainstream environmentalist"
- 1980's – B.A. Geology, M.S. Soil Science, Risk Assessment specialist
- 1990's – Technical project manager remediation sites, environmental policy
- 1994 Clinton EJ Executive Order – irrelevant to me and co-workers –WHY?

Clinton EJ Executive Order (1994)- Government agencies to consider EJ in:

-risk assessment and risk communication

-diets and consumption of natural resources

-cultural resources

-cleanup priorities

-community health data

-occupational exposure

-multiple and cumulative exposure

-community impact assessment

EPA EJ Definition

"The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of color, national origin, or income with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies."

Meaningful Involvement

- Democratic decision making

- Community empowerment and participation (early, direct, collaborative). Power sharing with government, industry, lawyers, scientists.

- Incorporation of cumulative environmental stressors (risks, existing health issues, housing problems)

(Cole, 2001)

EJ Survey to Environmental Cleanup Community

- Two surveys (Spring 2003 and Summer 2004)
- Who? Environmental consultants, scientists lawyers, engineers, managers, planners, public servants engaged in env. remediation
- Three question e-mail survey
- Spring 2003 survey (56 colleagues)
- Summer 2004 – snowball survey

Survey Q1: Define EJ without looking it up

- Environmental fairness concept recognized but extended to animals, plants, ecosystems, all humans

- Limited recognition of disproportionate impact to communities of color and low income or need to redress inequities.

- Better definitions from public agencies but mixed

Q2. Do you think that applying the principles of EJ are important for your profession and the clients you serve?

- No regulatory drive for considering EJ

- EJ not important or pertinent to their clients

- *"I don't remember ever having an environmental justice conversation with a client or internally in the company."*

- *"I do not believe my clients believe in the importance of justice or that it is indeed just"*

Survey Q3: How have you incorporated EJ into your work if at all?

- Approximately 70% had not

"It is very difficult to get the statistical power to meaningfully study these populations."

- Lack of regulatory requirement

"Our clients perceptions of their responsibilities are in direct response to environmental regulations, which do not necessarily address environmental justice."

Survey Question 3 (continued)

Some felt that EJ was part of their value system:

"EJ sits at the core of my belief structure, and is an outgrowth of having grown up poor. I want to make REAL opportunities for people – sustainable opportunities which means looking for a complex mix of environment, health care, jobs, recreation, and education. That no one can dominate over the other".

Survey Interpretation

- Environmental professionals are members of mainstream environmental culture

- Specialists - minimal to no social science education

- Huge disconnect between environmental regulations and public health regulations

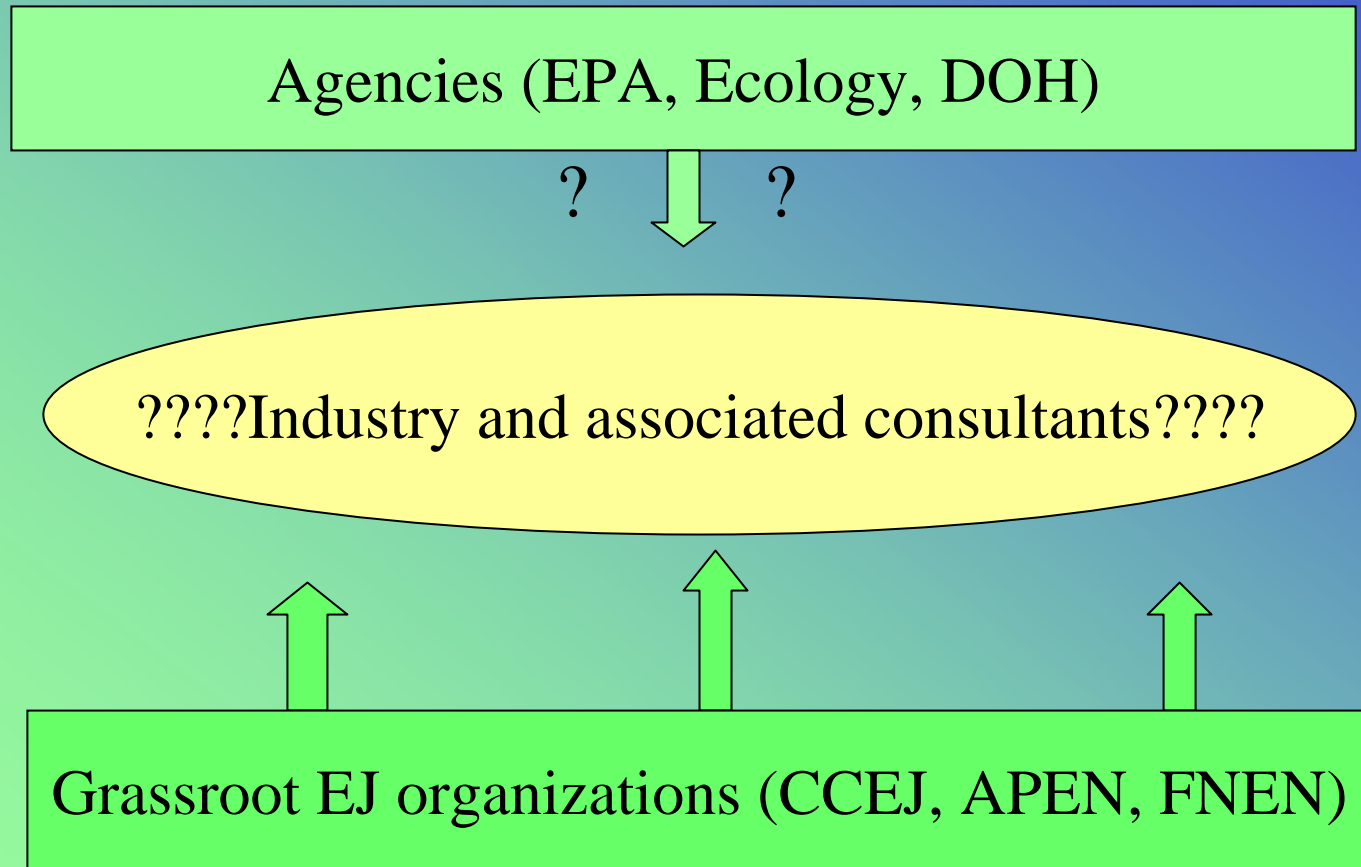 *"Asthma is the Department of Health's problem – it's not in our purview."*

Changes between 2003 and 2004 surveys?

- Double survey takers said no changes in EJ relevance to their work.

  -'EJ is conceptually important, as an ethical norm, but with my work limited to northwest Washington, it's always been very difficult to identify relevance'.

  - "I know what EJ is now, but I haven't come across the term EJ again since I did a google on it after your last survey"

New Trends between 2003 and 2004 surveys?

- Public agencies beginning to require EJ be considered in work products (WSDOT, FHWA) – Exception FEMA?

  - *"I see that FEMA is now part of Department of Homeland Security, they can ignore environmental rules"*

- CC language and effort to incorporate EJ awareness appearing in agency responses (DOH).

- Good for business - like sustainability is

Environmental Justice Awareness Action Plan Using Cultural Competency Model

Agencies (EPA, Ecology, DOH)

? ?

????Industry and associated consultants????

Grassroot EJ organizations (CCEJ, APEN, FNEN)

EJ/CC Awareness Training Program – Workshops/seminars

1. Introduction

   -What is CC framework?

   -What is EJ? (definition, history of movement)

   - How are CC and EJ related?

EJ/CC Training Program

2. Environmental Justice Issues in WA

   -Health problems (toxic incidents, chronic exposures)

   -Justice/Equity concerns (who exposed and why)

   -Present WA State examples (Duwamish fish contamination – tribes;

   pesticide exposure – farm workers, etc)

EJ/CC Training Program (cont.)

3. Discuss common myths/attitudes
   – Perceived lack of regulation (Clinton Exec Order, EPA and WA policies, Civil Rights, tribal treaties)

   – Contamination was there first (blame the victim)

   – Where's the evidence? (burden of proof)

   – Risk assessment culture (perpetuates injustice)

EJ/CC Training Program (cont.)

4. Conduct CC organization self-assessment
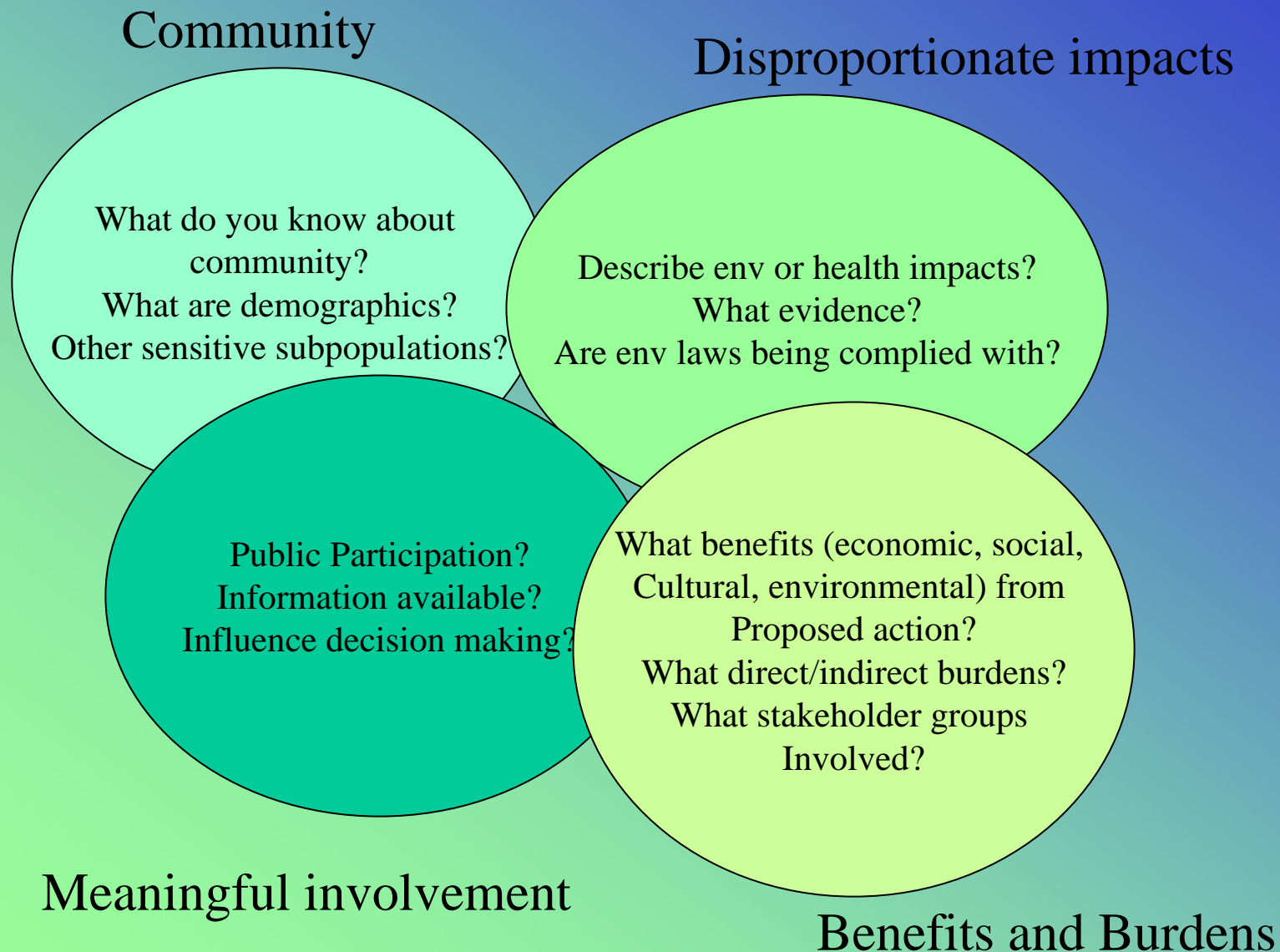
   -Examine mission statement, policy, procedure manuals

   -Review Board of directors, CEO, workers attitudes/beliefs

EJ/CC Training Program (cont.)
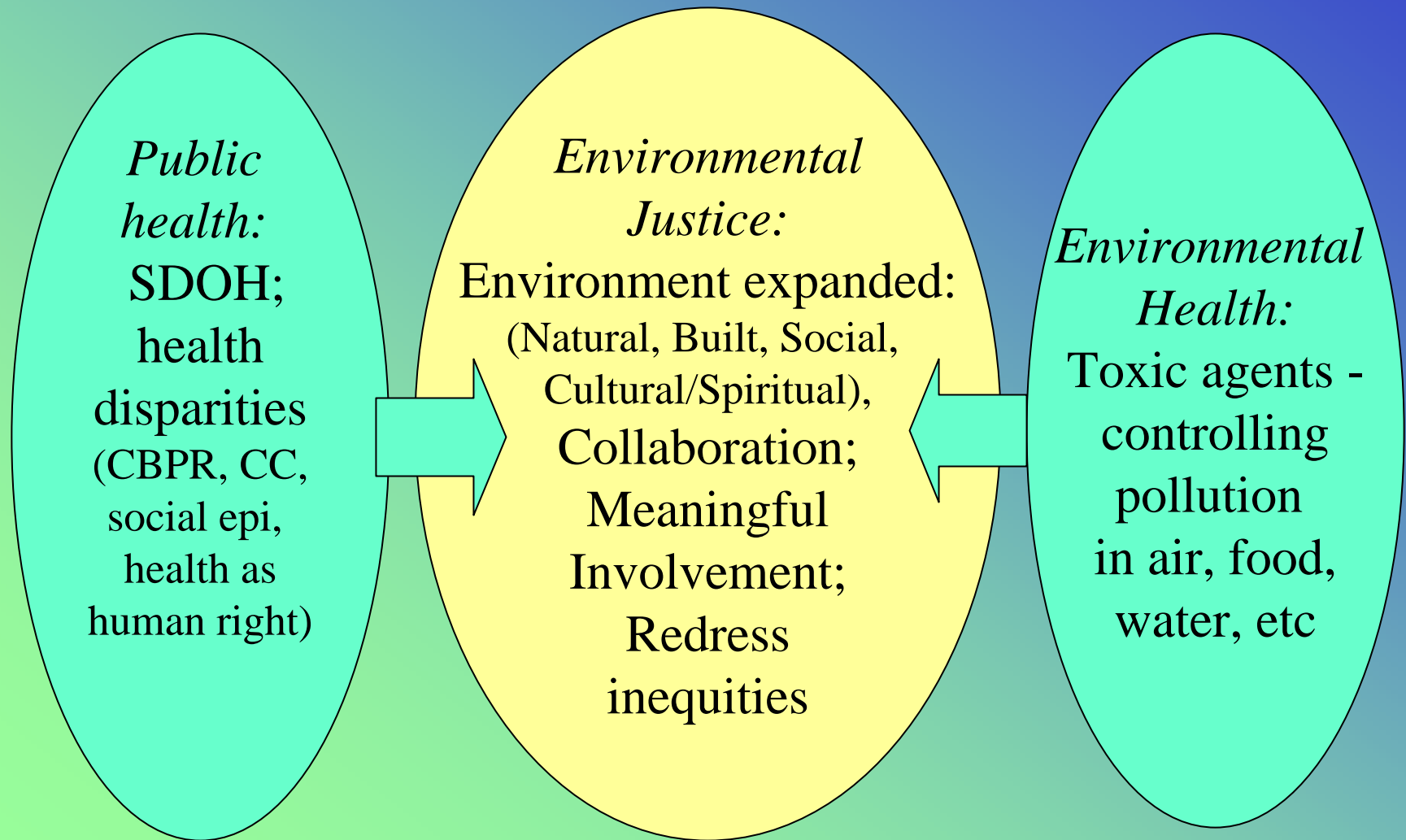
5. Identify EJ Communities

    - Delineate EJ communities in area

    -Strategize on creating EJ partnerships

    -Recruiting/training community for jobs

    -Brainstorm ideas for your organization

    -Organization case study

Four Domains Case Study Work Sheet

Community

Disproportionate impacts

What do you know about
community?
What are demographics?
Other sensitive subpopulations?

Describe env or health impacts?
What evidence?
Are env laws being complied with?

Public Participation?
Information available?
Influence decision making?

What benefits (economic, social,
Cultural, environmental) from
Proposed action?
What direct/indirect burdens?
What stakeholder groups
Involved?

Meaningful involvement

Benefits and Burdens

Source: EPA

Objective 5: –
Solving today's problems with decreasing budgets-
EJ can be used to re-integrate public health and environmental health and simultaneously be culturally competent?

Reconnecting public health and environmental health- EJ as a Meeting Ground

Public health: SDOH; health disparities (CBPR, CC, social epi, health as human right)

Environmental Justice: Environment expanded: (Natural, Built, Social, Cultural/Spiritual), Collaboration; Meaningful Involvement; Redress inequities

Environmental Health: Toxic agents - controlling pollution in air, food, water, etc

Acknowledgements

Dr. Sharyne Shiu-Thornton, UW

WA State Board of Health EJ recommendations (2001)

1. DOH and DOE to coordinate EJ efforts among local, state and federal agencies

2. Improving agency capacity including cultural competency strategy

Board EJ Issues

- Toxic fish consumption among tribes and other minorities,

- Pesticides in farm workers

- Urban pollution concentration among minorities and low income populations

- Seatac Airport community health concerns